

## PALESTINE CHRONOLOGY 2015

### JANUARY

**Jan. 1:** The Government of Palestine lodges a declaration under article 12(3) of the Rome Statute accepting the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court (ICC) over alleged crimes committed "in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, since June 13, 2014".

**Jan. 2:** Palestine accedes to the Rome Statute by depositing its instrument of accession with the UN Secretary-General.

**Jan. 11:** French President Francois Hollande and leaders including Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Mahmoud Abbas marched at the front of a mammoth procession of solidarity and defiance after attacks in the French capital that claimed 17 lives, which began near where gunmen killed 12 people at satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo.

**Jan. 16:** ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda opens a preliminary investigation into possible war crimes committed against Palestinians, including during last year's Gaza war.

**Jan. 21:** 23-year-old Hamza Muhammad Hasan Matrouk from Tulkarem refugee camp attacks passengers with a knife on a bus in Tel Aviv on Wednesday wounding at least 12 people before being shot and injured by a passing prison officer.

**Jan. 30:** Israel publishes tenders for 450 new settlement units in the West Bank, including 114 units in a new site known as East Migron. The move is harshly criticized by the US and UK.

### FEBRUARY

**February 2:** William Schabas, Chair of the UN Independent Commission of Inquiry on the 2014 Gaza conflict as established pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution S-21/1, submits his resignation following an official complaint from Israel on January 30 accusing him of "clear and documented bias against Israel."

**February 5:** UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announces Nickolay Mladenov of Bulgaria as his new Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and his Personal Representative to the PLO/PA.

**February 7:** Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas issues a presidential decree creating a 32-member committee, headed by chief negotiator Saeb Erekat, to identify and oversee cases to lodge with the ICC and prepare the necessary documents and records.

### MARCH

**March 4:** The Israeli right-wing Likud Party holds that a 2009 speech by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at Bar-Ilan University, in which he had expressed support for a Palestinian State, was "simply not relevant" any longer.

**March 17:** Netanyahu's Likud Party wins a surprise victory in Israel's early elections. In response, the PA said it will speed up its process of prosecuting Israel at the ICC, while international voices, including the British Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg and US President Obama told Netanyahu that their countries would reassess their approach to Israeli-Palestinian peace if he did not backtrack from remarks regarding two-State solution.

**March 24:** US President Obama expresses doubts about the prospect of a peace agreement under PM Netanyahu.

**March 27:** French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius announces that France intends to introduce a Security Council resolution that could present a negotiating framework to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

**March 31:** Press reports suggest that the US may push a renewed discussion of the Arab (Saudi) initiative.

## **A P R I L**

**April 1:** The State of Palestine formally gains membership of the ICC with the aim of pursuing Israelis for war crimes.

**April 2:** The Israeli army arrests PLC member Khalida Jarrar (PFLP) at her home in Ramallah for disobeying an Israeli order restricting her movement in the West Bank.

**April 6:** Marking the 67<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Deir Yassin massacre, the League of Arab States issues a statement calling for international intervention to stop Israeli crimes against Palestinians and to implement the decisions regarding the two-State solution, also stressing the importance of activating the Arab Peace Initiative.

**April 13:** Aida, a coalition of over 40 international aid agencies, releases the report “Charting a New Course: Overcoming the stalemate in Gaza”, urging the international community to take substantial steps to end the misery of Palestinians in Gaza.

**April 14:** The Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories Yoav Mordechai says that Israel will allow Palestinian doctors from the Bethlehem and Hebron districts to enter Jerusalem in their vehicles for the first time in 15 years.

**April 28:** Qatar and Turkey put forward a new proposal for a long-term ceasefire between Israel and Hamas via the Turkish and Qatari ambassadors in Ankara and Gaza. The basic plan, dubbed “Tahdiat Ala’amar” (Ceasefire for Reconstruction) will include a five-year moratorium on hostilities between the two sides. Turkey’s input to the plan will be to create a floating harbour off Gaza’s coast.

## **M A Y**

**May 13:** The Vatican formally recognizes the State of Palestine.

**May 17:** In Rome, Pope Francis declares as saints two 19<sup>th</sup> Century Palestinian nuns – Marie Alphonsine Ghattas of Jerusalem who had dedicated her life to the poor and Mariam Bawardy of Galilee known as the Patron to Prisoners –marking the first time Palestinian nuns are canonized.

- Yesh Din says a report that 85.3% of investigative files against Israeli [settlers] who harm Palestinians in the West Bank are closed due to the failure to locate suspects or insufficient evidence, and just 1.9% of complaints to the Israeli police by Palestinians result in a conviction.

**May 27:** The Quartet announces that Tony Blair will step down as the Quartet’s Representative.

- Israeli President Reuven Rivlin says he is not opposed to negotiations with Hamas, and that Israel and the Palestinians have a shared interest in improving the quality of life for residents in the Gaza Strip.

## **J U N E**

**June 9:** Israel’s High Court of Justice rejects a petition to reinstate planning authority in Area C of the West Bank to local Palestinians, ruling that the petition did not prove that Palestinians in Area C were discriminated against when compared with the “Israeli population” there.

**June 18:** Jewish extremists torch the Church of the Multiplication at Tabgha on the Sea of Galilee.

**June 22:** The Report of the UN Independent Commission of Inquiry on the 2014 Gaza conflict suggests that possible war crimes were committed by both sides.

**June 24:** UNDP Special Representative Valent says it would likely take 30 years to rebuild the extensive damage from the 2014 war in Gaza.

**June 26:** The State of Palestine signs a historic accord with the Vatican enshrining Palestine's special status as the birthplace of Christianity and the cradle of the monotheistic religions.

## JULY

**July 13:** Saeb Erekat takes office as PLO Secretary-General, replacing the dismissed Yasser Abed Rabbo.

**July 20:** The Knesset passes a new law punishing stone-throwers with up to 20 years imprisonment.

**July 24:** Peace Now reports about advanced Israeli plans for the development of 1,065 housing units in eight different settlements throughout East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

**July 30:** The PA announces a reshuffle of the Palestinian cabinet, a decision Hamas labelled a "coup".  
- The Israeli Knesset approves a law allowing prisoners on hunger strike to be force-fed.

**July 31:** A settler arson attack in Duma village near Nablus, leaves 18-month old Ali Saad Dawabsha dead and his four-year old brother, his mother and father, seriously injured. The parents later succumb to their wounds.

## AUGUST

**August 8:** According to an UNRWA study the infant mortality rate in Gaza has risen for the first time in five decades; while in 2008, the number of babies dying before the age of one was 20.2 per 1,000 live births, it was 22.4 in 2013.

**August 13:** The Israeli Foreign Ministry has warned the EU against funding building projects in "Area C" of the West Bank.

**August 13:** President Abbas issues a decree ordering the closure of the Palestinian Peace Coalition (PPC), which promotes along with Israeli activists the Geneva Initiative. PPC Chairman is Yasser Abed Rabbo, who was the PLO Secretary-General until being dismissed from the post by President Abbas last month. The PPC's assets and property in Ramallah are said to be transferred to the Information Ministry.

**August 21:** Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mashaal confirms that his organization and Israel were engaged in negotiations over a long-term truce via several mediators.

**August 22:** Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas resigns as head of the PLO Executive Committee, followed by a majority of the Committee members.

## SEPTEMBER

**September 2:** The Knesset passes with 45-14 a controversial counterterrorism bill, which significantly increases the government's authority, expands the definition of what constitutes a terrorist organization, and raises the maximum sentence for terrorism-related offences to 30 years in prison.

**September 8:** The Palestine football team plays a World Cup qualifier at home for the first time, holding the United Arab Emirates to a goalless draw in the Faisal Hussein stadium in Ar-Ram.

**September 8:** The UNGA votes with 119 to 8 (including Australia, Israel and the US) and 45 abstentions, to allow the flags of Palestine and the Vatican - both having observer status - to be raised at the UN.

**September 30:** Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas tells the UNGA that Palestine is a State occupied by Israel and no longer bound by the 1993 Oslo Accords, as violations and Israeli settlement activity take place on a daily basis.

- At a ceremony at the UN headquarters in New York, the Palestinian flag is raised for the first time.

## OCTOBER

**October 9:** Six Palestinians are killed and 145 others injured when Israeli military forces open fire on a demonstration by the Gaza border fence near Khan Younis.

**October 11:** The Palestinian Ministry of Health reports that Israeli forces have shot over 1,300 Palestinians with live and rubber-coated bullets since the beginning of the month.

**October 13:** The League of Arab States holds an emergency meeting in Cairo to discuss the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people, land, and holy sites.

**October 16:** Palestinians set parts of the Joseph's Tomb complex in Nablus on fire.

**October 21:** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu causes a worldwide outrage when he tells the 37<sup>th</sup> World Zionist Congress that the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Haj Amin Al-Husseini, who met with Hitler in 1941, was to be blamed for the Holocaust, saying "He [the mufti] flew to Berlin. Hitler didn't want to exterminate the Jews at the time, he wanted to expel the Jews. And Haj Amin Al-Husseini went to Hitler and said, 'If you expel them, they'll all come here.' 'So what should I do with them?' he asked. He said, 'Burn them.'"

- The UNESCO Executive Board adopts a resolution in which it strongly condemns Israeli aggressions and illegal measures restricting Muslims' freedom of worship at al-Aqsa Mosque and requests the Occupying Power to respect the pre-1967 *status quo*.

**October 24:** During a meeting with US Secretary of State John Kerry in Amman, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas demands "international protection" for the occupied Palestinian territory against "terrorist" acts by Israeli settlers, Israel's "extrajudicial executions," and punitive demolitions of homes.

**October 28:** Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas addresses the international community at a Special Meeting of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva and urges the UNSC to establish a special regime for the international protection for the Palestinian people.

## NOVEMBER

**November 1:** By a vote of 51:17 the Knesset passes in second and third (final) readings a temporary law making three years in prison the minimum penalty for dangerous rock-throwing, and depriving anyone convicted of rock-throwing from the benefits of the National Insurance Institute (NII) while in prison. If a child is convicted, the child's parents will not receive NII benefits while the child serves the sentence.

**November 4:** In Ramallah, the PLO Executive Committee approves a new political programme that could redefine the Palestinians' ties with Israel.

**November 9:** Israel's civilian planning committee for construction in the West Bank gives a green light to some 2,200 new housing units within existing settlements and retroactively recognizes two outposts, in a bid to pre-empt legal attempts by Palestinians and rights groups to see the sites evacuated.

**November 11:** The EU issues new guidelines for labelling products from illegal Israeli settlements.

**November 16:** Israel's security cabinet outlaws the Islamic Movement's northern branch in Israel in what Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says was a bid to end "dangerous incitement."

**November 20:** Jonathan Pollard is released on parole after serving a 30-year life sentence in the US for spying for Israel.

**November 29:** Israel says it will suspend diplomatic contacts with EU bodies involved in the “diplomatic process with the Palestinians”, following the EU decision to label goods produced in Israel's illegal settlements.

## DECEMBER

**December 1:** Israel reportedly plans to ask countries with whom it has friendly ties and who want Israeli cooperation to change their anti-Israel voting patterns at the UN.

**December 2:** Head of the Quartet Office in the Middle East, Kito de Boer, says that one million new jobs would be needed in Palestine during the next 15 years.

**December 3:** Addressing foreign journalists, Israeli President Rivlin said that the solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict is the establishment of a confederation with defined borders and land swaps but one army.

- The BDS movement announces a victory as the UNHCR office in Jordan confirmed to journalists that it no longer does business with the British private security firm G4S.

**December 6:** PFLP and PLC member Khalida Jarrar, who was arrested in April, is sentenced to 15 months in jail at the Ofer military court, *inter alia* for encouraging attacks against Israel and violating a travel ban.

- Hamas rejected calls to let the Palestinian Authority reassert control on the Gaza side of the Rafah border crossing with Egypt.

**December 9:** During a meeting with Israeli President Reuven Rivlin at the White House, President Barack Obama says that the US will keep working towards Middle East peace despite slim chances for near-term success.

**December 13:** During a conference organized by *Haaretz* and the New Israel Fund in New York, PLO Secretary-General Saeb Erekat calls on Israel “not to give up” on the two-state solution. He said the reality being created on the ground will not create a single binational Jewish-Palestinian state but “one state, two systems,” which he described as “an apartheid state.”

- Palestine announced that it was submitting its instrument of accession to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

**December 17:** Amid a widespread campaign to clamp down on left-wing groups, Israel has banned the activist group Breaking the Silence from speaking in schools or to groups of soldiers.

- Israel and Turkey have reached a preliminary agreement to normalize relations, including the return of ambassadors, after Turkey agreed to drop charges against Israeli officers in the deaths of Turkish activists aboard a ship in 2010, and Israel will establish a fund for the victims’ families.

**December 18:** UN Special Rapporteur Forst expressed grave concerns that human rights defenders are being subjected to physical attacks, harassment, arrest and detention, and death threats.

**December 22:** The Parliament of Greece unanimously votes in favor of recognizing the State of Palestine as an independent state. The vote is attended by visiting President Abbas and Greek Prime Minister Tsipras.

**December 29:** The PA Detainees and Ex-Detainees Committee said that Israel had detained 2,179 in 2015.

**December 30:** OCHA says 170 Palestinians and 26 Israelis have been killed in 2015 in attacks and clashes.